

MEI Weekly.



Russian President Vladimir Putin meeting Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to discuss their partnership in Syria. This 90-minute meeting in 2015 took place during Mr Putin's first visit to the Islamic Republic in more than a decade. Photo: english.khamenei.ir/ via Wikimedia Commons.

WHAT'S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS AND MORE

READ: As Europe and Asia grow closer and the rapid growth in economic exchanges over the last two decades necessitates the creation of a new, tentative political order, it is no longer sufficient to view Iran as a "Middle Eastern" state. Six scholars examine Iran's political and economic relations in the new Eurasian context in this volume of *MEI Insights*. Read the full issue here.

WATCH, READ & LISTEN: Missed the book talk with Dr Kristian Coates Ulrichsen on the Qatar crisis, its geopolitical implications and lessons for small states? Catch up via our [event video](#), [summary](#) and [podcast](#) here.



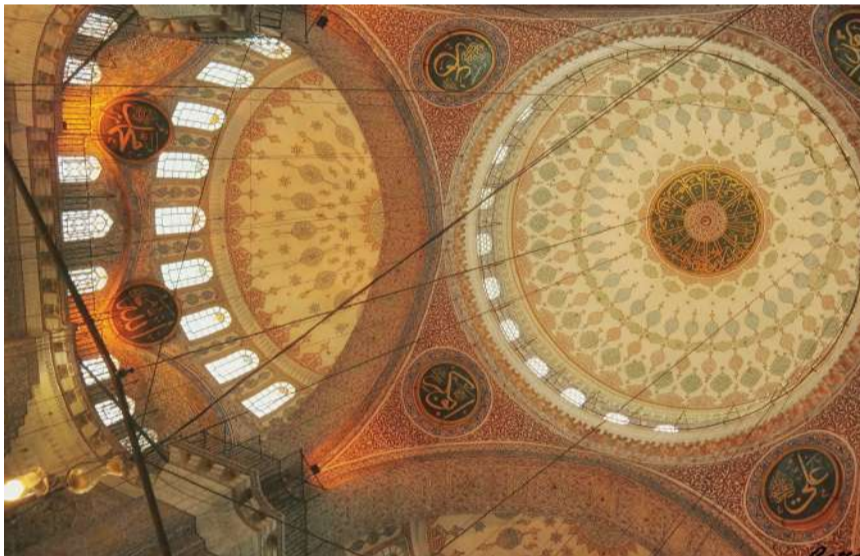
WATCH, READ & LISTEN: The gradual shift in the global economic order has re-oriented the contours of the Gulf–Asia relations. Will this global economic shift continue and what does it portend for Gulf–Asia relations? Revisit the discussion via our [event video](#), [event summary](#) and [podcast](#) here.

READ: In this week's edition of *MEI Insights*, Nicole Grajewski examines the Eurasian dimension of Russia–Iran relations and, in particular, Iran's place in Russia's endeavour to establish its centrality as an order-builder in the macro-regional system of Eurasia. Read the full article here.

WHAT'S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

China and Iran Near Partnership

Going against the Trump administration's efforts to isolate Iran, China and Iran have drafted a sweeping economic and security partnership that will clear the way for billions of dollars of Chinese investments in energy and other sectors. The agreement will vastly expand Chinese presence in banking, telecommunications, ports, railways and dozens of other projects. In exchange, China will receive a regular, and reportedly heavily discounted, supply of Iranian oil over the next 25 years. The plan has angered Washington and appears to signal Beijing's growing impatience with the Trump administration after its unilateral abandonment of the Iran nuclear agreement.



Built in the sixth century, Hagia Sophia has been a Byzantine cathedral, an Ottoman mosque and in recent years, a museum. The Unesco World Heritage site in Istanbul is one of the world's most potent symbols of Christian–Muslim rivalry. Photo: cattan2011/ via Flickr.

Realising Turkey's Islamist Dream

After announcing last Friday (10 July) that Hagia Sophia will be reopened for Muslim prayers, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan purportedly could not sleep, shaken by emotions that an era of humiliation had ended. In the eyes of Mr Erdogan and Islamists, Turkey's first president Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's experiment in secular republican government and conversion of the Ottoman mosque, formerly a Byzantine cathedral, into a museum was a Western imposition. They are now taking the first steps of revenge, says Mr Selim Koru, a writing fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute.

Burning Ships in Iran Add to Dozens of Fires

A large fire broke out at a shipyard in the southern Iranian port city of Bushehr on Wednesday (15 July), burning seven ships. This adds to the unusual number of fires and explosions in recent months across Iran's forests, factories, and military and nuclear facilities that have rattled ordinary Iranians. While Iranian officials have said that some of the episodes may have been acts of sabotage by the United States and Israel, and possibly domestic groups, their acts also blamed weather, accidents and equipment malfunctions for the others. The absence of a clear culprit has left the Iranian government in a quandary as it risks appearing weak by not responding to sabotage but retaliating could set off a costly military confrontation.

CALENDAR: UPCOMING MEI EVENTS

MEI Salon Series: Travel Blog with Mandy Tay

Ms Mandy Tan's video of her Persian trip in 2013 showed the world a very different side of Iran and attracted some 20,000 views within one week on YouTube and Vimeo. In this MEI Salon, she will share her experience working in Dubai as a trailer producer and how travelling in Iran as a solo female traveller transformed her. Join us for this virtual public talk conducted via Zoom on **28 July** from **3pm to 4.30pm**. Registration is free and all are welcome. Click here for more details now!



LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP WATCH ON

King Fahd Causeway Set to Reopen

The 25-km-long King Fahd Causeway linking Saudi Arabia and Bahrain is set for a gradual reopening on 31 July. The causeway has been closed since 7 March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The opening plans will include precautionary health protocols.



Kuwait to Resume Commercial Flights

A plan to operate commercial flights to and from Kuwait from 1 August has been approved by the Kuwaiti Council of Ministers. The plan entails a three-stage resumption starting at 30 per cent capacity. Previously, Kuwait had suspended all commercial and international flights in March because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

FOLLOW US FOR THE LATEST UPDATES!



CAN'T MAKE IT TO OUR EVENTS? LISTEN AT YOUR OWN TIME!

